

ASK AHSC

ANSWERS TO HEALTH QUESTIONS

From The University of Arizona Health Sciences Center (AHSC) in Tucson

Q I was told to take calcium supplements daily after my gastric bypass operation. Which is better, calcium carbonate or calcium citrate? Why? And how much should I take? (I'm a 55-year-old male, 6'3", 205 lbs.)

R.H.

A Calcium carbonate has more calcium per gram than calcium citrate, so it would take less volume (fewer pills or less liquid) of the calcium carbonate to provide the same amount of absorbable calcium.



Because calcium carbonate requires hydrochloric acid, a stomach acid, to be digested and absorbed, the type and extent of your gastric bypass will determine which calcium supplement is better for you.

The recommended intake of calcium for a 55-year-old male is 1,200 milligrams daily based on the 1997 Institute of Medicine

guidelines. However, you should check with the dietitian who assisted you after your surgery, or check with your surgeon, for a specific, individualized recommendation.

—Deborah Pesicka, R.D.,
registered dietitian, University Medical Center, Tucson

Q What is a neuroblastoma?

A Neuroblastoma is the most common solid tumor in children found outside the brain. It usually arises in the abdomen or chest, and the peak age of incidence is 2 years old. About 500 hundred children are diagnosed with this cancer in the United States each year.

Researchers find the disease especially interesting because when a child under the age of 12 months develops neuroblastoma, it often disappears on its own (the only known tumor that does). However, most children are diagnosed when the disease is advanced and their prognosis is dismal. Less than 20 percent of these high-risk patients survive five years.

The majority of children with neuroblastoma initially respond to conventional chemotherapy. But unfortunately, the relapse rate is high.

One solution to the high relapse rate may be to develop a treatment that can be used when the disease is in a minimal state. To do that, researchers at the Children's Research Center are studying the "MYC-ey mouse."



In many patients with advanced neuroblastoma, numerous copies of the MYCN gene are found in tumor cells. The MYCN mouse over-expresses the MYCN gene and as a result, spontaneously develops tumors in the same places children do. These mice provide an excellent model to study new treatments for this often-fatal disease. Our researchers will observe the development of tumors in the MYCN mice and will test a novel anti-cancer agent that can target neuroblastoma cells on the molecular level.

The next generation of cancer drugs will be smarter drugs. We know that in some cancer cases, such as neuroblastoma, just trying to kill the cancer cells isn't enough, so we're working to create drugs that change the biologic basis of the disease.

—Rochelle Bagatell, M.D.,
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